

VZCZCXRO5485  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHKU #4568/01 3381344  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 041344Z DEC 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
TO RHWSMRC/USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7776  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 004568

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: GENERAL ABIZAID'S MEETINGS WITH THE KUWAITI AMIR,  
PRIME MINISTER AND DEFENSE MINISTER

REF: KUWAIT 3992

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: In a November 28 meeting, the Amir warmly welcomed General Abizaid back to Kuwait, noting the enduring friendship between his country and the United States. On Iraq, the Amir said the U.S. needs to quickly hand over authority to Iraqi security forces, and reduce its own exposure in Iraqi cities and built up areas. He stressed that U.S. forces should not withdraw, but should redeploy to be quickly available to support the Iraqis. The Amir said a regional approach will have to address Iran, and was hopeful a united Western front would be effective in changing Iranian behavior. General Abizaid said that the U.S. intends to hand over security responsibility to Iraqis as quickly as possible over the coming months. In a separate meeting, the Prime Minister also stressed standing up Iraqi forces to handle security responsibilities on their own. He noted the negative effects of Iranian influence, and wondered whether Maliki, despite his good intentions, is up to the job. He assured General Abizaid of Kuwait's continuing support. The MinDef also stressed the close relationship between Kuwait and the U.S., and offered Kuwait's support both for U.S. forces and for the Iraqi government as it tries to get a handle on its border security. He said Iran continues to be a negative influence, and said Kuwait will continue to work with others in the region on security support for the Government of Iraq. Bilateral military issues were only touched on, with the PM saying the relationship "could not be better." End Summary.

Meeting with the Amir  
-----

12. (C) Commander, U.S. Central Command General John Abizaid met separately November 28 with Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al-Sabah, and First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. The Amir warmly welcomed General Abizaid and his staff back to Kuwait, remarking on the enduring bonds between his country and the U.S. He said the critical issue for Kuwait and the region remains Iraq, and welcomed the opportunity to exchange views.

Striking a familiar theme, the Amir said the United States needs to lower its profile in Iraq, withdrawing U.S. forces from cities and built-up areas where they are exposed to attack and raise tensions by their presence. Iraqis must be pushed to take over day-to-day security responsibilities in these areas. The Amir stressed that this would not be a withdrawal but a redeployment, with U.S. forces ready to step in to assist the Iraqis as needed. The Iraqis, said the Amir, do not want a U.S. withdrawal.

13. (C) General Abizaid assured the Amir that the United States would be looking to transfer responsibility to Iraqi

forces as quickly as possible in the months ahead. He said that while we face difficult problems in some areas, there is progress in others. We need to take a regional approach that addresses not only the sectarian violence, but Iranian meddling, Syrian provocations, and Al-Qaeda. The Amir agreed that a regional approach is critical, and that Iran's role is problematic. He expressed hope that the Talebani visit to Tehran would begin to address some of these issues. He noted the work of the Iraq and neighbors group that had begun to address security and training needs for the Iraqis, particularly on border security. The Amir hoped that a strong message from the U.S. with Europe and others would be heard in Tehran.

14. (C) General Abizaid said the Iranians make a mistake if they underestimate our resolve. However, it is clear that a resolution to the Iraq issue will require very strong political, diplomatic, and economic efforts in addition to its military aspect. The Amir agreed, and said he believed that the new Secretary of Defense would understand that well. He also expressed his hope that the Baker Commission would provide useful advice, given its impressive collective experience.

#### Meeting with the Prime Minister

-----

15. (C) The Prime Minister opened by noting the twin challenges of Iraq and Iran. He expressed his horror at recent suicide bombings in Iraq, asking how close the Iraqis are to being ready to take security responsibility. General Abizaid said the U.S. remains committed to training and preparing Iraqi security services, and transferring security responsibility as quickly as possible. He acknowledged that

KUWAIT 00004568 002 OF 002

progress has been faster with the Iraqi Army than with the police. He noted that the most severe problems are within 50 kilometers of Baghdad, while the situation is significantly better in a number of other provinces where we are closer to being ready to turn over security responsibility.

16. (C) The Prime Minister said the Iraqis must be able to stand on their own feet. He said Kuwait "respects" Maliki, who has a sincere desire to achieve reconciliation, but questions whether he can get the support he needs from his coalition. Sectarian violence continues to increase, while indiscriminate suicide bombers, some of the worst in history, continue unchecked. Kuwaitis question whether Maliki is up to the job. Iran is a big part of the problem. The border is open, and Iranian influence pours in to the detriment of the reconciliation process. Kuwait, he said, fears a sectarian-violence fueled flow of refugees across the Kuwaiti border, which could present new security problems.

17. (C) General Abizaid said Iraq remains far from civil war. The two critical institutions, the government and the army, are holding together. We need Arab friends in the region to embrace Maliki and his government, to welcome and bring him into the Arab fold so he does not turn to Iran. The Prime Minister said that regional problems are linked, whether we talk about the Palestinians, Iraq, or Lebanon. We need to sit and talk to all parties, including the Iranians. In any case, said the PM, the U.S. can be assured of Kuwait's support and friendship. Asked by General Abizaid about the U.S.-Kuwait military relationship, the PM said it "could not be better." "We are brothers in arms," he said.

#### Meeting with First Deputy PM and Minister of Defense

-----

18. (C) The Defense Minister told General Abizaid that Kuwait feels great sorrow when they see U.S. casualties in Iraq. "We know you are there for a humanitarian purpose," he said. He expressed the view that Iraqis need to play a greater role in providing for their own security, and asked

how close we are to seeing that happen. General Abizaid said we will likely see an acceleration of the training mission and further handovers of responsibility, but warned that the issues in Iraq are as much a political problem as a military and security problem. He said we are unlikely to see the conditions for a sharp withdrawal of U.S. troops over the short term.

¶9. (C) The Defense Minister said non-Iraqis, especially Iranians, continue to stir up trouble. He pointed to the recent neighbors meeting of Interior Ministers (reftel) that sought to focus more regional efforts on border issues, which many in the region believe is a key problem. The Defense Minister stressed again the importance of turning over security authority to Iraqi forces as quickly as possible. He offered to help the U.S. in any way he could, including continued strong intelligence-sharing, and said Kuwait continues to stand ready to help the Iraqis with security issues as well. General Abizaid thanked the Minister for his support and friendship.

¶10. (U) General Abizaid did not review this message.

\*\*\*\*\* \*  
For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable> s

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>  
\*\*\*\*\* \*  
LEBARON